

Capsule Summary  
SM-600  
Thomas Log House  
Chaptico Vicinity  
Private

mid to late-nineteenth century

The Thomas Log House, constructed in the mid to late-nineteenth century, represents the only documented example of a two room log house remaining in St. Mary's County. The dwelling also maintains an important association with a local African American family. The one story, single pile Thomas Log house is constructed of horizontal logs joined at the corners with half-dovetail notches. The interstices between the logs are filled with a combination of brick, mud, and riven strips of wood. The interior of the house is significantly divided into two distinct spaces. Each of these spaces feature exposed floor joists and are entirely whitewashed. This interior arrangement is profoundly different from other log dwellings documented in St. Mary's County. Most log slave dwellings in St. Mary's County, such as the Sotterley Slave Quarter (SM-7A), consisted of only one room while others featured two, non-communicating but equally sized rooms such as the Brome-Howard Slave Quarter (SM-33A). In stark juxtaposition to these buildings, the Thomas Log House was less architecturally regimented as it had a more traditional arrangement of connected and differentiated spaces. This floor plan suggests that the house was built by either freed slaves just prior to the Civil War or ex-slaves after the abolition of slavery although the grandmother of Louis X. Thomas (the current owner) vividly remembers living in the house and believes it was built by slaves in the 1850s or 1860s.

Overall, the Thomas Log house represents one of the most significant African American dwellings yet documented in St. Mary's County. While buildings such as the Sotterley Slave Quarter (SM-7A) and the Blair's Purchase Slave Quarter (SM-125A) portray the rigid regimen imposed by slave life, the Thomas house moves toward more normalized domestic organization. This poses critical questions about how freedmen and ex-slaves may have differentiated themselves from their slave neighbors and/or forefathers through architectural expression.

SM-600, Thomas Log House  
St. Mary's County  
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Data

Historic Context

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Geographic Organization:            | Western Shore  |
| Chronological/Developmental Period: | Agricultural-Industrial Transition, 1815-1870<br>Industrial Urban Dominance, 1870-1930 |
| Historic Period Theme:              | Architecture<br>Cultural<br>Agriculture  |
| <u>Resource Type</u>                |  |
| Category:                           | Building   |
| Historic Environment:               | Rural  |
| Historic Function and Use:          | Residence  |
| Known Design Source:                | None   |

DOE   yes   no

## state

## 7. Description

Survey No. SM-600

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good            | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   | date of move _____                                |

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resources: 1

The Thomas Log House is located on Yowaiski Mill Road approximately 0.6 miles north of the intersection of Yowaiski Mill Road and Chaptico-Mechanicsville Road. Oriented on an east-west axis, the house is situated on relatively flat parcel just north of the Gardiner-Yowaiski Mill (SM-420). While the house's west side currently faces the road, the east side was the original primary elevation as the original farm lane ran to the east of the house. The dwelling is currently vacant and surrounded by young trees and undergrowth. A modern house is located just to the south and a new dwelling is scheduled to be built just to the north.

The Thomas Log house is a one-and-a-half story, three bay, two room dwelling with a gable roof. Constructed c. 1860-1870, the house was constructed on a fieldstone and brick foundation. The exterior walls were originally covered with vertical board-and-batten siding that consisted of circular sawn boards and battens attached to the logs with fully-formed cut nails. The logs themselves were joined at the corners with half-dovetail notches and secured with large bolts. The interstices between the logs were filled with a combination of brick, mud, and riven strips of wood. Horizontal boards were then nailed over the cracks to protect the chinking. At the juncture of the roof and exterior walls is an open cornice where the individual rafter feet are visible. The rafters are birdsmouthed over the top log. A corrugated metal roof, pierced by a single interior brick chimney flue, covers the entire building.

The east or primary elevation is pierced by three bays--a centrally located door flanked on either side by a window. The door, itself, consists of a series of beaded boards that are secured on the inside of the door by horizontal battens. The windows exhibit ghosts that suggest the presence of sash. The south elevation is pierced on the first floor by a single door. The attic story is pierced by a window that does not currently exhibit a sash. The west elevation features a centrally located flanked on either side by windows. These bays roughly correspond to the openings on the east elevation. While the door has been replaced, the window on the north end of the elevation contains the outlines of a sash that originally contained six panes. It does not appear to have been moveable. The north elevation features a single window opening on the attic story.

The interior of the dwelling has changed little since it was initially constructed. The house features two rooms. The larger room measures approximately 12 feet by 16 feet and could be entered from the east or west sides via opposing entries. This room, as well as the other, was entirely whitewashed and the hewn joists left exposed. Like on the exterior, horizontal boards were placed over the spaces between the logs to hold the chinking. This room was heated by a brick chimney flue that formed part of a partition wall that separated the house's two first floor spaces. The partition wall itself consists of vertically placed, circular sawn planks. These planks are fastened to the floor as well as to an overhead floor joist. A wide, intermediate, beaded chair rail further strengthens the partition. A single door connects the two first floor rooms together. The second room, which measures approximately 16 feet by 8 feet features two opposing windows, a door to the exterior, as well as a winder stair. The door to the exterior allows this space to function independently from the main room. The attic story was not decorated at all as the common rafter roof was left exposed. The circular sawn rafters were joined at the peak with butt joints.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. SM-600

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900–                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation  |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Thomas Log House, constructed in the mid to late-nineteenth century, represents the only documented example of a two room log house remaining in St. Mary's County. The dwelling also maintains an important association with a local African American family.

The one story, single pile Thomas Log house is constructed of horizontal logs joined at the corners with half-dovetail notches. The interstices between the logs are filled with a combination of brick, mud, and riven strips of wood. The interior of the house is significantly divided into two distinct spaces. Each of these spaces feature exposed floor joists and are entirely whitewashed. This interior arrangement is profoundly different from other log dwellings documented in St. Mary's County. Most log slave dwellings in St. Mary's County consisted of only one room. Examples include the Sotterley Slave Quarter (SM-7A), Riverview Log House (SM-120A) and Laurel Grove Slave Quarter (SM-563). Some quarters consisted of two, often non-communicating, but equally sized rooms. Examples of "double-quarters" include the Brome-Howard Slave Quarter (SM-33A), Blair's Purchase Slave Quarter (SM-125A) and the Bushwood Slave House (SM-110A). In stark juxtaposition to these buildings, the Thomas Log House was much less architecturally regimented as it featured a more traditional arrangement of connected and differentiated spaces. This conventional floor plan suggests that the house was possibly built by either freed slaves just prior to the Civil War or ex-slaves after the abolition of slavery.

Land records, as well as oral history, reveal that the house and much of the surrounding property has been owned or tenanted by members of the Thomas family since at least 1910. The grandmother of Louis X. Thomas (the current owner) vividly remembers living in the house and believes it was built by slaves in the 1850s or 1860s. The architectural evidence suggests a mid to late-nineteenth century construction date. The widespread use of cut nails, the presence of circular sawn boards for the floor and partition wall, the low pitched roof, and the shared, centrally located, brick chimney flue are all consistent with the time period.

The first mention of the Thomas family in the land records appears in 1910 when James H. and Sarah Thomas purchased a 10 acre property called "Tennison's Lot" for \$50. Marriage and census records reveal that on December 30, 1895 James H. Thomas married Sarah Queen in Leonardtown at the courthouse. By 1910 James, who worked at a lumber mill, and Sarah had four children Mary Alice, James Wilson, John Harrison, and Rachel Lola. Further research, either through documents or oral history, is warranted in order to illuminate the Thomas lineage as well as how the Thomas' used and functioned the house and property over time.

Survey No. SM-600

## 10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

H 

**11. Form Prepared By**

**state** Maryland

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DHCP/DHCD  
100 COMMUNITY PLACE  
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023  
514-7600**

SM-600, Thomas Log House  
St. Mary's County  
Significance 8.1

Overall, the Thomas Log house represents one of the most significant African American dwellings yet documented in St. Mary's County. While buildings such as the Sotterley Slave Quarter (SM-7A) and the Blair's Purchase Slave Quarter (SM-125A) portray the rigid regimen imposed by slave life, the Thomas house moves toward more normalized domestic organization. This poses critical questions about how freedmen and ex-slaves differentiated themselves from their slave neighbors and/or forefathers through architectural expression.

SM-600, Thomas Log House  
St. Mary's County  
8.2 Significance

Chain-of-Title

(All deeds are located at the Land Records Office, St. Mary's County Courthouse, Leonardtown, Maryland unless otherwise noted.)

Reference: Liber MRB 383, Folio 337

Grantee: Louis X. and Jane C. Thomas

Grantor: George and Agnes Thomas

Date: November 4, 1987

Notes: The deed notes that two parcels are transferred. Parcel #1 contains 70 acres and is called Harrow Hills and was originally owned by Mary Ellen Gardiner. Parcel #2 contains 10 acres and is called "Tennison's Lot."

Reference: Liber CBG 24, Folio 157

Grantee: George and Agnes Thomas

Grantor: Louise F. Long, et al

Date: July 17, 1952

Reference: Liber CBG 24, Folio 206

Grantee: Mary R. Fowler and Louise F. Long

Grantor: John F. Briscoe

Date: January 23, 1950

Reference: Liber JMM 10, Folio 521

Grantee: John F. Briscoe, Sr.

Grantor: A.K. Love and Paul J. Bailey

Date: November 10, 1937

Notes: As stipulated by the St. Mary's County Circuit Court of Equity in case No. 1744 NE (Decree Record Liber JMM 6, Folio 496) John F. Briscoe v. Carrie Woodland, the property is sold for \$1000 to John F. Briscoe. It is also here that the property is combined. During testimony elicited during the proceedings, a witness describes the tracts as containing "a corn house, stable, dwelling, barn, and other outbuildings."

Parcel #1

Reference: Liber EBA 13, Folio 167

Grantee: William Briscoe

Grantor: William H. Gardiner, Maud S. Gardiner, Anna Gardiner, Gwynette B. Gardiner

Date: November 21, 1914

Notes: The heirs of Mary Ellen Gardiner sell the 75 acre property, called "Part of Harrow Hills," to William Briscoe who is listed as already living on the tract.

Reference: Liber JAC 3, Folio 43

Grantee: M. E. Gardiner

Grantor: F.A. Harding and Ann M. Harding

Date: January 1, 1868

Notes: Here Mary Ellen Gardiner receives a considerable amount of property that includes the 248 acre tract called Part of Harrow Hills.



SM-600, Thomas Log House  
St. Mary's County  
8.3 Significance

Parcel #2

Reference: Liber JMM 2, Folio 147

Grantee: William Briscoe

Grantor: Eugene Trice and Annie C. Trice

Date: January 10, 1924

Notes: This deed describes the property "Tennison's Lot" as containing 10 acres.

Reference: Liber JMM, Folio 36

Grantee: Eugene Trice

Grantor: W. Ernest Clarke, Sheriff

Date: October 11, 1923

Notes: The property is sold at auction as a result of a Circuit Court case involving the Eastern Shore Trust Company (assignee of James W. McPherson) vs. James H. and Sarah Thomas.

Reference: Liber EBA 9, Folio 417

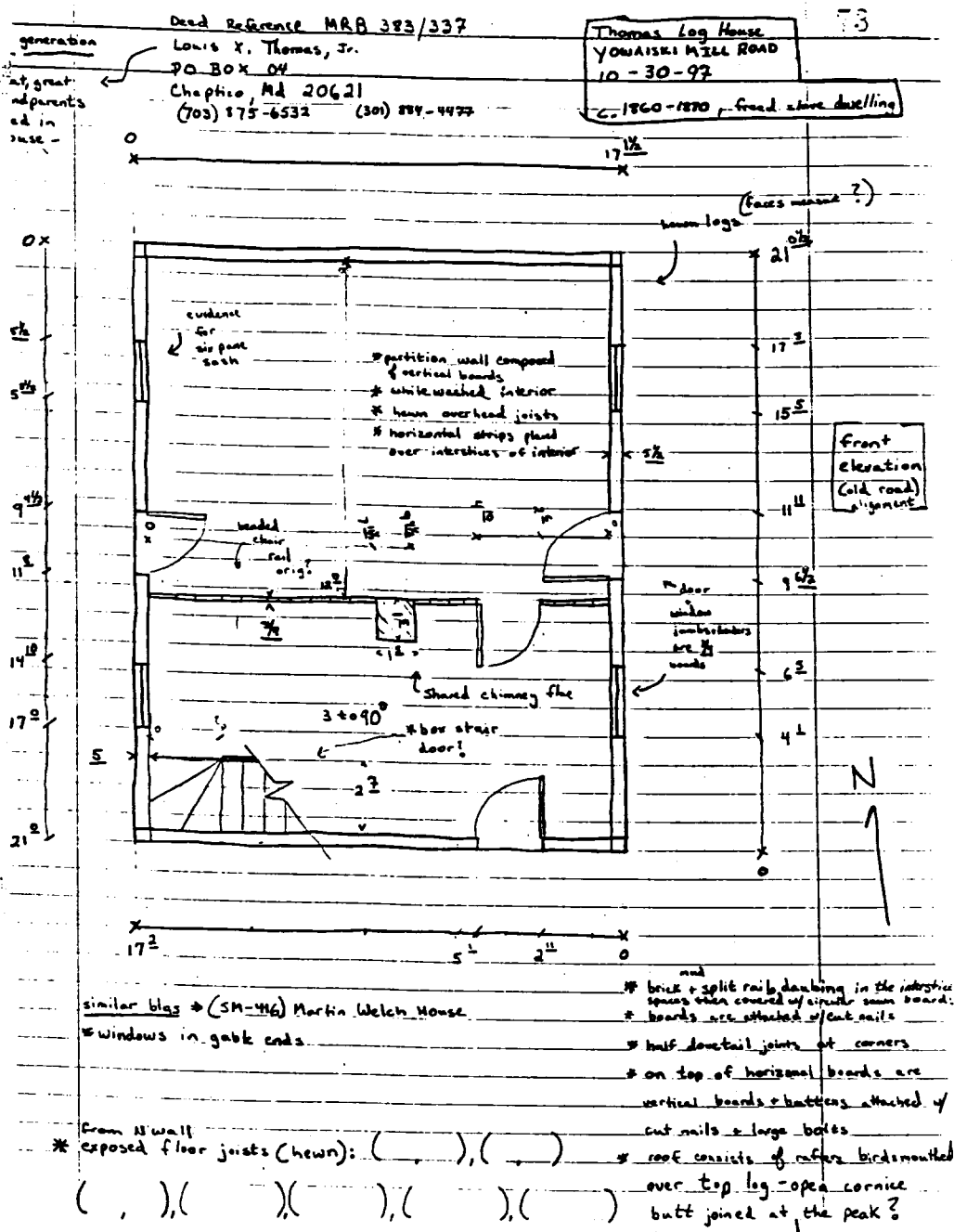
Grantee: James H. and Sarah Thomas

Grantor: J. Franklin Adams

Date: July 12, 1910

Notes: The property called Tennison's Lot is purchased for \$50. It notes that the property is located 300 yards north of Gardiner's Mill and the boundaries form a rectangle.

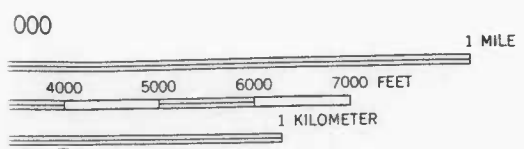
**SM-600, Thomas Log House**  
**St. Mary's County**  
**8.4 Significance**



**Figure 1. First floor plan of the Thomas House. Measured and drawn by Kirk E. Ranzetta. Exposed floor joists have been deleted for clarity.**



CHAPTICO 1.9 MI.  
ONARDTOWN 13 MI.



AL 20 FEET  
EA LEVEL



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. - 1965  
346000m.E.

### ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty ——— 4 LANE 6 LANE Light-duty ———  
Medium-duty ——— 4 LANE 6 LANE Unimproved dirt ———

SM-600  
Thomas Log House  
Chaptico Vic.  
St. Mary's County  
Charlotte Hall Quad

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
IRVEY, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.  
D SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

L,  
ANG  
5

V8



SM-600

Thomas Log House

St. Mary's County

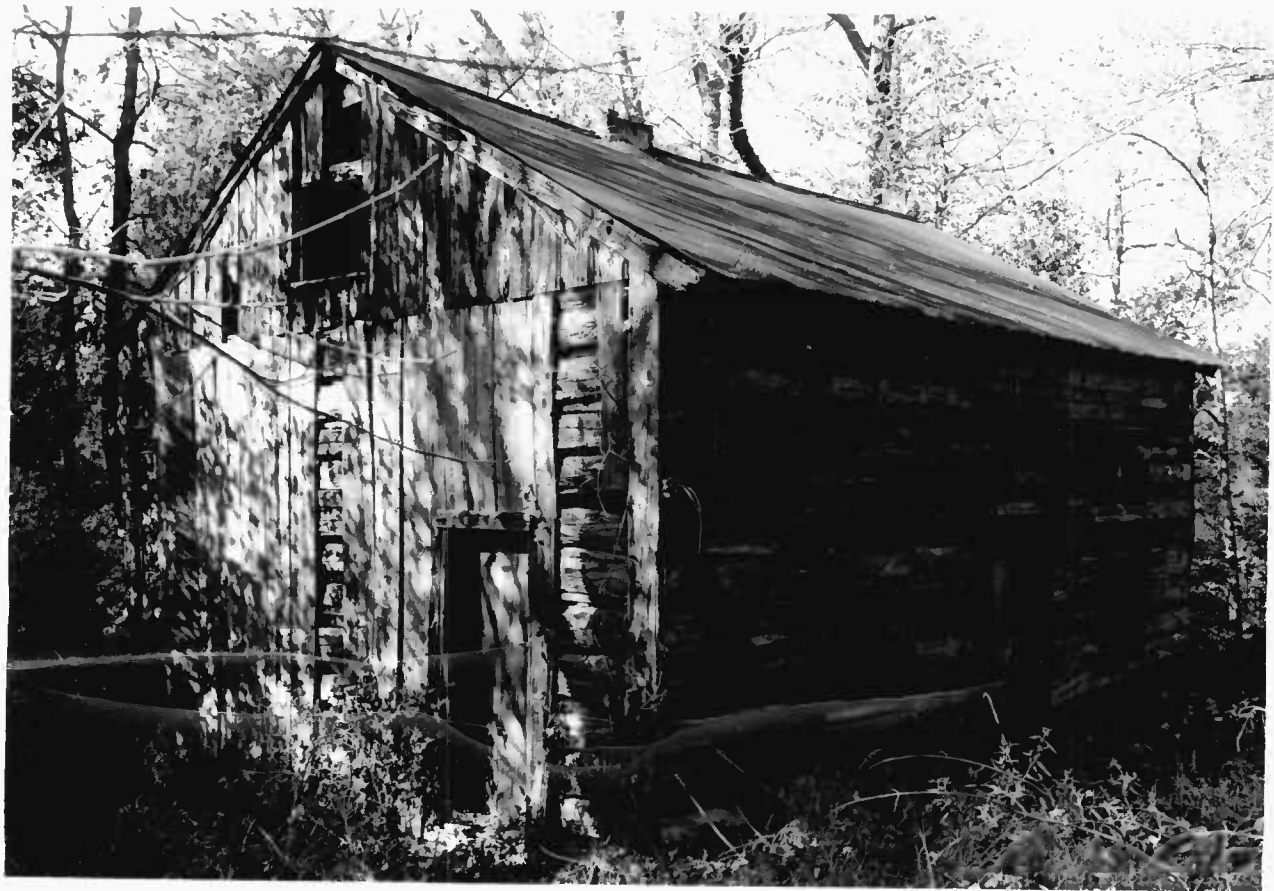
Kirk Ronzetta

Nov., 1997

Ad SHPO

E elevation

1 of 3



SM-600

Thema: Log House

St Mary's County

Kirk Ronzelli

Nov., 1997

md SHPO

E + S elevations

2 of 3





SM-600

Thomas Log House

St. Mary's County

Rick Roncetta

Nov., 1997

MD CHPO

detail of corner catching, NE corner

3 of 3